

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the above-referenced application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 - 16 (Cancelled).

17. (New) A station for receiving a message from an interconnected station on the input side and transmitting message information relating to the received message to an interconnected station on the output side, comprising:

response means for returning a response to a request to receive and accept a message to the interconnected station on the input side when receiving said message from said interconnected station; and

congestion detection means for detecting that congestion has occurred in the interconnected station on the output side, wherein when occurrence of congestion is detected by said congestion detection means, said response means conducts congestion control by responding with a delay for a prescribed time to the request to receive and accept said message from the interconnected station on the input side.

18. (New) The station according to claim 17, wherein said prescribed delay time is a time obtained by dividing an average response time from the interconnected station on the output side by a session number in the interconnected station on the output side that is multiplied by a margin ratio.

19. (New) The station according to claim 17, wherein the congestion control is also conducted with switching means for switching said message information of the session in which the congestion has occurred to another session when the occurrence of congestion is detected by said congestion detection means.

20. (New) The station according to claim 19, wherein when there are a plurality of interconnected stations on the output side and congestion has occurred or a closed state has been assumed in all the sessions to a specific interconnected station on the output side, said switching means distributes and sends said message information to other interconnected stations on the output side.

21. (New) The station according to claim 17, wherein said congestion detection means detects that congestion has occurred in the interconnected station on the output side when an error indicating congestion is returned from the interconnected station on the output side in response to a request to transfer said message information to the interconnected station on the output side.

22. (New) The station according to claim 17, wherein said congestion detection means detects that congestion has occurred in the interconnected station on the output side from a parameter representing a congested state in the response from the interconnected station on the output side to a request to transfer said message information to the interconnected station on the output side, this parameter being contained in said response.

23. (New) The station according to claim 17, wherein said congestion detection means detects that congestion has occurred in the interconnected station on the output side when the average response time in a plurality of the latest responses has reached m times (where $m > 1$) of the average response time in the normal state, in the response from the interconnected station on the output side to a request to transfer said message information to the interconnected station on the output side.

24. (New) The station according to claim 17, further comprising:

issuance means for issuing a circuit state verification request with a prescribed period with respect to a session in the interconnected station on the output side that has is to be in a congested state by said congestion control means, wherein said congestion detection means detects that a congested state in said session has been eliminated when the average response time in a plurality of the latest responses to the issued requests from said issuance means has become equal to or less than the average response time in the normal state.

25. (New) A station for receiving a message from an interconnected station on the input side and transmitting message information relating to the received message to the interconnected station on the output side, comprising:

response means for returning a response to a request to receive and accept a message to the interconnected station on the input side when receiving said message from said interconnected station; and

congestion detection means which detects the occurrence of congestion in the own station when the filling ratio in a buffer memory that stores said messages or received requests that have not been completely processed exceeds a prescribed filling ratio, wherein when the occurrence of congestion in the own station is detected by said congestion detection means, said response means conducts congestion control by responding with a delay for a prescribed time to the request to receive and accept said message from the interconnected station on the input side.

26. (New) The station according to claim 25, wherein said prescribed delay time is a time obtained by dividing an average response time from the interconnected station on the output side by a session number in the interconnected station on the output side that is multiplied by a margin ratio.

27. (New) The station according to claim 25, wherein the congestion control is also conducted with switching means for switching said message information of the session in which the congestion has occurred to another session when the occurrence of congestion in the interconnected station on the output side is detected by said congestion detection means.

28. (New) The station according to claim 27, wherein when there are a plurality of interconnected stations on the output side and congestion has occurred or a closed state has been assumed in all the sessions to a specific interconnected station on the output side, said switching means distributes and sends said message information to other interconnected stations on the output side.

29. (New) The station according to claim 25, wherein said congestion detection means detects that congestion has occurred in the interconnected station on the output side when an error indicating congestion has been returned from the interconnected station on the output side in response to a request to transfer said message information to the interconnected station on the output side.

30. (New) The station according to claim 25, wherein said congestion detection means detects that congestion has occurred in the interconnected station on the output side from a parameter representing a congested state in the response from the interconnected station on the output side to a request to transfer said message information to the interconnected station on the output side, this parameter being contained in said response.

31. (New) The station according to claim 25, wherein said congestion detection means detects that congestion has occurred in the interconnected station on the output side when the average response time in a plurality of the latest responses has reached m times (where $m > 1$) of the average response time in the normal state, in the response from the interconnected station on the output side to a request to transfer said message information to the interconnected station on the output side.

32. (New) The station according to claim 25, further comprising:

issuance means for issuing a circuit state verification request with a prescribed period with respect to a session in the interconnected station on the output side that is detected to be in a congested state by said congestion control means, wherein said congestion detection means detects that the congested state in said session has been eliminated when the average response time in a plurality of the latest responses to the issued requests from said issuance means has become equal to or less than the average response time in the normal state.